



This is probably the most popular mid-size SUV in SA. It is known as the Prado in South Africa and Japan and referred to as the Land Cruiser Colorado in the UK – hereafter only referred to as the Prado. Its popularity is due to good looks, reliability, reasonable running cost, usable size (compact enough for city use and spacious enough for long trips), useful power and good off-road capabilities.

The Prado came in two body variants, the five-seat short wheel base (SWB) and the five OR seven seat long wheel base (LWB).

Various specification levels were offered, ranging from a base spec with NO luxuries (mainly sold in Japan only), a couple of mid-spec variants

Toyota Land Cruiser Colorado/Prado

with all the necessary luxuries (usually called the GX, GS and TX) and then there is the range topping VX which even included electric leather seats and a sunroof. Note that only the GX, TX and VX had aircon as standard, while it was an optional extra on lesser models. The SWB only came in mid-range specifications.

Three engines were offered. An underpowered 2.7 and a pleasant-but-thirsty 3.4 V6 came in petrol, while the popular diesel had the very good 3.0TD KZTE engine. This KZTE engine was replaced in 2001 by the 3.0 D4D currently used in the South African Hilux. The SWB only came with the diesel option. A manual and automatic were offered in the diesel.



A “grey imported” SWB. Note the round lights on some “jap specs”

Low mileage Prado’s are quite scarce in SA, so do buy one that’s got low mileage to make it worth exporting. If you stumble across a Prado in the UK, remember that it would be a “grey import” showing in kilometre’s on the clock, not miles.



While most LWB versions had a rear diff-lock as standard, the SWB versions lacked this feature (it was offered as an optional extra, so some Prado's do have it) and it really needs diff-lock in order to bring out its true off-road capabilities. One can always buy a rear axle from a salvage yard that's got a 'locker for about £150 and have it fitted in SA for about R1500.

Remember that these vehicles were designed to work off-road and to be very reliable. This resulted that some Prado's had services skipped (does it have full service history?) or had an abusive life. Check for underside damage (scrapes on the chassis would be fine, but bent items on the chassis can spell trouble)

-A whine from the engine can mean that the Turbo (if equipped) is worn out. Also check for excessive smoke under hard acceleration. Fortunately a complete used replacement engine for the 3.0TD cost only R15 000 (incl. fitment) in SA so should you consider a Prado with a tired engine for a cheap price, you know how much to budget for a replacement engine.

-How's the gearbox? A soft whine would be acceptable, but a loud one can mean expensive bills in the near distant future.

-Does the 4WD actually work?

-Rust is not a problem on Prado's, so should you spot some rust it means it was in an accident and repaired on a tight budget. In such a case, walk away unless the vehicle is really cheap. No matter how small the rust patches are, prepare for at least R15 000 to have the rust fixed in SA.

